

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Water Rights Bureau

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

Note: Instructions to DNRC staff for preparing this EA can be found at:  
[http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/eis\\_ea.html](http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/eis_ea.html)

**Part I. Proposed Action Description**

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* Howard Page  
299 Green Mountain Road  
Trout Creek, MT 59874
2. *Type of action:* Provisional Permit to Appropriate Water 76N 30022228
3. *Water source name:* Two Groundwater Wells
4. *Location affected by action:* SW SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Section 9, Township 24N, Range 31W, Sanders Co.
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*  
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. The applicant is seeking a water use permit to use two wells for multiple domestic purposes in an approved Sanders County Subdivision. The subdivision is located in Sections 9, Township 24N, Range 31W, Sanders County and will consist of 15-lots. Water to supply the subdivision will come from two wells drilled to 96 feet and 116 feet. The scope of this EA will focus mainly on the water use from these two wells to identify impacts, if any, from this requested action. Environmental review information as well as identified impacts for the overall subdivision can be found in the final plat approval located with the Sanders County Commissioners Planning and Zoning Office. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requires two wells, one of which, serves as a back-up source of water should one well fail. The wells will be manifold and operate on an alternate-pumping schedule. Within the subdivision water will be used to irrigate 10 acres and will serve a total of 15 lots. The water use permit is a critical element to the success of the subdivision and is of great benefit to the appropriator.
6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:*  
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

Spoke with Dan at Sanders County Planning & Zoning  
Montana Historical Society  
Montana Natural Heritage Program

## **Part II. Environmental Review**

### **1. Environmental Impact Checklist:**

#### **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

##### **WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION**

**Water quantity** - *Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

*Determination:* Not Applicable to groundwater.

**Water quality** - *Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

*Determination:* Not applicable to groundwater.

**Groundwater** - *Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

*Determination:* No surface water flows will be impacted from this appropriation from the deep aquifer. The wells were completed in accordance with the rules of the Board of Water Well Contractors and grouted to more than 18 feet below ground surface to maintain water quality. Pump testing the wells found adequate water to supply the needs of the subdivision.

**DIVERSION WORKS** - *Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

*Determination:* A 90-gallon per minute Gould's pump will be installed in each well. There will be no impact to the above-specified items.

##### **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**Endangered and threatened species** - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

*Determination:* The property is currently undeveloped and provides wildlife habitat for some ungulates such as elk and deer but is not considered to be a specific winter game range. The property lacks bear grazing forage and does not provide an adequate prey base for wolves and therefore, does not provide suitable habitat for these endangered species. The Sanders County Planning and Zoning Office has stated large and potentially dangerous animals may pass through the site and prospective owners of these lots should be made aware of this situation. It is

recommended lot owners contact the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to obtain information on living with wild animals. The water use permit is basically part of an already approved subdivision and will not create further impacts than those identified by Sanders County.

**Wetlands** - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

*Determination:* There are no wetlands within the subdivision boundaries.

**Ponds** - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

*Determination:* This project does not involve ponds.

**GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE** - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

*Determination:* The property is being subdivided for the purpose of multiple domestic uses. No impact anticipated.

**VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS** - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

*Determination:* The lot owners are responsible for re-vegetation and the control and eradication of noxious weeds on their lots. The developer shall be responsible to do so until ownership is transferred on lots and the common area. Disturbed vegetation will be replaced with native grass seed mix, which will help to displace noxious weeds.

**AIR QUALITY** - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

*Determination:* The internal private roadways will be maintained for dust and other small particulate pollution by a Property Owners Association. The impact to air quality as a result of this subdivision is anticipated to be minimal.

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES** - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

*Determination:* A cultural resources survey is up to the property owner since it is private property. Should any archeological site be discovered during construction, work in that area will be suspended until the site can be fully evaluated.

**DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY** - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

*Determination:* None

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

**LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS** - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

*Determination:* The development is in an area that is currently not zoned. The project is in compliance with Sanders County subdivision regulations.

**ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES** - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

*Determination:* There will be no impact to the quality of recreation or wilderness activities nor will access be denied to any established recreation areas.

**HUMAN HEALTH** - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

*Determination:* This development does not impact human health.

**PRIVATE PROPERTY** - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes\_\_\_ No\_X\_. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

*Determination:* N/A

**OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

*Impacts on:*

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? Yes
- (c) Existing land uses? Yes
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? Yes
- (f) Demands for government services? No
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No
- (h) Utilities? Yes
- (i) Transportation? No

(j) Safety? No

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** Increased traffic has been addressed in the preliminary plat approval. Human population for this area will increase and may at sometime in the future impact the groundwater supply but because of a continuous recharge to the source and the vastness of the artesian aquifer impacts are not anticipated anytime in the near future.
3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** The action requested under this permit does not require mitigation or stipulation measures. Water availability has been shown to be available without impact to surrounding water users.
4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** There is no reasonable alternative to this proposed water supply and no action would disable the development of the subdivision.

### **PART III. Conclusion**

*Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?* No

*If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:* No significant impacts have been identified, therefore no EIS is required.

*Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:*

*Name:* Rich Russell

*Title:* Water Resources Specialist

*Date:* June 23, 2006